

Livingston Park Seminary,  
Rochester, Monroe County, N. Y.

HABS No. 5-R-9

HABS  
NY,  
28-Roch,  
7-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 5

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Norman R. Sturgie, District Officer  
353 Broadway, Albany, New York

HABS  
N.Y.,  
28 ROOM,  
7-

LIVINGSTON PARK SEMINARY  
Livingston Park and Spring Street  
Rochester, Monroe County  
New York

Owner: Girls' School.

Date of Erection: About 1825 (card); 1827 or 1828 (text); 1827 (drawings).

Architect: Unknown; north porch wing by Hugh Hastings (?).

Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two, and basement.

Materials of Construction: Main part, wood; basement, stone; wing, brick.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS,  
BUILDINGS. AND RESERVATIONS  
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
WASHINGTON

N.Y.  
88-8004,  
7-  
Page 1

LIVINGSTON PARK SEMINARY

1827-28

ROCHESTER, MONROE CO., N. Y.

This residence, best known as the Livingston Park Seminary, and so called for the reason that it has proudly claimed this dignified historic old school for girls as its Alma Mater for the past three quarters of a century.

The erection of the building can best be determined by the land records, which show a deed of property by David Cathcart, otherwise known as Lord Alloway, to James K. Livingston, on August 9, 1827. The consideration was \$315.00. Mr. Livingston was a real estate operator of some magnitude, and did considerable building.

He undoubtedly started the erection, either late in the fall of 1827 or early in the spring of 1828. Just how long he took for the erection is not known; however, it was completed some time before 1834, for in that year, on May 1st, the land records show a transfer of the property by James K. Livingston and his wife Charlotte to Joseph Strong, which reads as follows: "land in the City of Rochester, apart of Lot 34, a sub-division of great Lot 51, in Township number 1 short range, bounded on the North, by the South line of Spring St., on the South by land in possession of Henry E. Rochester, on the East, by an Avenue or private street, known as Locust St., and on the West, by land conveyed to Augustus Phelps, by deed bearing date of March 1, 1828, being the homestead of the parties of first part and containing  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres, with the right to the said party of the second part, his heirs, assigns, etc., to use in common the said enclosed Avenue known as Locust Street." The consideration was \$6130. This same deed is found again in the transfer of Joseph Strong and his wife Harriett, when they sold the property to Dr. Frederick Backus on October 1, 1838 for the sum of \$12000.00. It is quite evident that Joseph Strong made certain alterations to the residence to have obtained the large purchase price. Dr. Backus added the North Porch which he used as an office. This was done in the early Greek Revival period, and seems to have added an unhappy feeling, to this otherwise happy symphony of Post Colonial Architecture.

The magnificent stairway, if placed in the house by either Mr. Livingston or Strong, surely must have had some other location formerly.

Again we find the same transfer by the Dr. Backus heirs on May 17, 1860 to Philip H. Curtise. This time the consideration was \$8000.00 to settle the estate.

ADDRESS:  
CHIEF ARCHITECT,  
3085 NAVY BLDG.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS,  
BUILDINGS, AND RESERVATIONS  
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
WASHINGTON

N.Y.  
28-800  
7-

LIVINGSTON PARK SEMINARY

(page two)

The property at present is owned by Mrs. Charles H. Gifford of Jamestown, N. Y., daughter, and one of the heirs of Philip Hand Cathro (Mason) Curtiss.

Mrs. Curtiss was the founder of the Seminary and to further its needs, the unharmonious Mid-Victorian school room wing in the rear was added together with several false chimneys.

An early photograph of the residence shows a delicately turned balustrade with corner pedestals along the eaves of the Main Roof, and the North Porch Wing.

This balustrade was removed early in the twentieth Century, it having fallen into decay. The shingle roof has been covered with one of tar and gravel, and the quaint square picket fence which once fronted the property has long since disappeared. The four stately columns which grace the front are of Solid Black Walnut, built up in drum formation and doweled together. The original clock used in the school still ticks on, and the old-fashioned school desks still retain their usefulness. Mrs. Curtiss conducted the school until her death, January 24, 1892. From 1892 to 1900 the seminary was carried on by Miss Georgia C. Stone, and since that time, until the present has been conducted by Mrs. William (Eurith Pattison Rebasz). Dr. Azel Backus, first President of Hamilton College was the father of Dr. Frederick Backus, and Mrs. Frederick Backus was a daughter of Col. William Fitzhugh one of the partners of Col. Nathaniel Rochester. Col. William Fitzhugh and his brother Col. Peregrine Fitzhugh, were aides on General Washington's personal staff. The Architect is unknown, although it is quite probable that Hugh Hastings of Hartford Conn., who did considerable work on this private park between 1832 and 1838 might have had something to do at least with the remodeling and addition of North porch wing. The columns on this porch have no entasis.

This private thoroughfare which is still a private park, was first known as Locust Street, as mentioned in the deed. Later on as Park Street and finally took its name of Livingston Park from James K. Livingston, who erected homes on both Corners at the North end of the street, the first of which formed the front of the Seminary.

CHARLES WILLIAM ELDRIDGE, HISTORIAN  
Rochester, N. Y.

June 21, 1934.

*Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.*